

MODESTO, CA – Congressman Jim Costa (D-Fresno) and Congressman Dennis Cardoza (D-Atwater) announced today a \$147,000 grant from the California Endowment to the Valley Coalition for a UC Merced Medical School. The grant will ensure communities throughout the San Joaquin are involved in the planning of the future UC Merced medical school.

Congressman Costa and Congressman Cardoza also applauded the Coalition's adoption of a formal resolution calling for an acceleration of the school's development as well as increased clinical opportunities for students in the San Joaquin Valley.

"This grant money is great news for UC Merced and our Valley," Congressman Costa said. "A projected shortfall of up to 17,000 physicians in California by 2015 will have a disproportionately adverse impact on the rapidly growing San Joaquin Valley, where access to healthcare is already 31 percent lower than the state average. The medical school at UC Merced, incorporating clinical education at UCSF's Fresno Medical Education Program would help to ease this looming physician crisis."

"This marks a significant step forward," said Congressman Cardoza. "For far too long our Valley residents have been underserved for health care. Today's resolution shows that the Valley is unified in our call to have the medical school here by 2015. The grant award also means that communities throughout the Valley will have a direct say in the planning process."

The Valley Coalition for a UC Merced Medical School is a valleywide effort comprised of nearly 200 elected officials, cities and counties, health care professionals and community groups that have joined for the purpose of supporting the development of the UC Merced medical school.

Recently, UC Merced contracted the Washington Advisory Group to provide recommendations for the medical school's development. That report recommends a three-phased plan calling for a fully developed independent medical school by 2020. Earlier this month, University of California President Mark Yudof offered his support to the plan and pledged to help implement it.

Today, the Valley Coalition for a UC Merced Medical School also offered its support to the plan with its first formal resolution. Further, the coalition's resolution called for incorporation of medical education and clinical work at UCSF, Fresno and other locations in the San Joaquin Valley, as appropriate, during the "Phase II" UC Davis-UC Merced partnership program. The resolution also calls for the medical school to be developed and fully independent by 2015, five years earlier than called for in the WAG report.

Interest in the medical school has been significant in the eight-county region of the San Joaquin Valley and Mariposa. The \$147,000 grant from the California Endowment, a statewide foundation, will ensure that communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley are involved in the planning and their individual needs are taken into consideration.

"This is a great day not only for UC Merced and its future students but for every citizen of the San Joaquin Valley who will have greater access to the high-quality health care they deserve," said Congressman Cardoza.